AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please replace the claims with the claims provided in the listing below wherein status, amendments, additions and cancellations are indicated.

1. (Previously presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto.

2. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus according to ~~any of claims 1, 5-7, 12-32, 39, 40, 42-44, 48 or 63~~ claim 1, wherein said at least one holding plane includes upper and lower holding planes both being located above said cutting plane, on which respective first and second cut stalk holding means for holding the stalks are disposed.

3. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 2, wherein the first cut stalk holding means of the upper holding plane are offset against a line of

travel from the second cut stalk holding means of the lower holding plane in an area of the working strand of the endless conveyor.

4. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~one of claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, wherein the conveyor links of the endless conveyor are made each in integral form, in one piece or from parts permanently joined.

5. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, a front face of each of the conveyor links being substantially closed by a first deflecting shield extending between the cutting plane and the lower holding plane and a second deflecting shield extending between the lower holding plane and the upper holding plane.

6. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 5, wherein the deflection shields extend between joint axes of the conveyor links.

7. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 5, wherein the deflection shields have a bulging shape and the deflection shields of adjacent ones of the conveyor links form, in the delivery area in which a turnabout of the endless conveyor takes place, a substantially continuous, kink-free curved path.

8. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, further comprising a frame including a cutting knife carried thereon, said endless conveyor being held by said frame and movable relative thereto.

9. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 8, wherein the endless conveyor includes a lower driver at said cutting plane which cooperates with the cutting knife as a counter-knife.

10. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1 further comprising at least one stripper cooperative with the front side of the endless conveyor, and with respect to which, the endless conveyor is relatively movable.

11. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 10, wherein the at least one stripper is disposed in the delivery area of the endless conveyor.

12. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and

outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, the harvesting apparatus further comprising at least one stripper cooperative with the front side of the endless conveyor, and with respect to which, the endless conveyor is relatively movable, the at least one stripper being configured as a substantially rigid body standing on edge, each said at least one stripper being disposed between at least one adjacent vertical pair of the at least one cutting plane and the at least one cut stalk holding plane of the endless conveyor.

13. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, the harvesting apparatus further comprising at least one stripper cooperative with the front side of the endless conveyor, and with respect to which, the endless

conveyor is relatively movable, the at least one stripper sweeping substantially completely at least one of a distance between the cutting plane and a holding plane and another distance between an adjacent pair of cut stalk holding planes comprised of the at least one holding plane.

14. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, the harvesting apparatus further comprising at least one stripper cooperative with the front side of the endless conveyor, and with respect to which, the endless conveyor is relatively movable, the at least one stripper being held in the delivery area and extending forward with a free end thereof substantially in a line of travel and reaching into a curved turnaround area of the endless conveyor.

15. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 14, wherein the at least one stripper is disposed on both sides of the inlet opening to the further processing apparatus and forms a lateral guiding surface for the cut stalks.

16. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, the harvesting apparatus further comprising at least one stripper cooperative with the front side of the endless conveyor, and with respect to which, the endless conveyor is relatively movable, the at least one stripper being combined in one component for cooperation with two superimposed deflection shields.

17. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively

comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, the harvesting apparatus further comprising at least one stripper cooperative with the front side of the endless conveyor, and with respect to which, the endless conveyor is relatively movable, the at least one stripper being comprised of spring steel.

18. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, the harvesting apparatus further comprising at least one stripper cooperative with the front side of the endless conveyor, and with respect to which, the endless conveyor is relatively movable, the at least one stripper being yieldingly supported by spring mounting.

19. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants

to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, said at least one holding plane including a first holding plane, each conveyor link having at least a first driver in said first holding plane which is part of a flat body lying in a conveying and guiding plane, the flat body having at least one projection forming the at least first driver which projects outwardly across a direction of rotation of the endless conveyor.

20. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 19, wherein said at least one holding plane includes a second holding plane each conveyor link at least a second driver in said second holding plane which is part of an other flat body lying in the conveying and guiding plane, the other flat body having at least one other projection forming the at least second driver which projects outwardly across the direction of rotation of the endless conveyor.

21. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 20, wherein at least one of the flat body and the other flat body has two forwardly extending projections.

22. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 21, wherein approximately equal intervals are formed between the projections of said flat body and the projections of an adjacent flat body lying in a same plane.

23. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 20, wherein the flat body and the other flat body each have two projections.

24. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 20, wherein the projections of at least one of said first and second holding planes are configured as flat bodies extended in a parallelogram-like manner.

25. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 20, wherein the projections expand counter to a line of travel and thus a distance between the projections decreases in an area of the working strand counter to the line of travel.

26. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 20, wherein, in the lower holding plane, substantially parallelogram-shaped projections are formed and, in the upper holding plane, triangular projections of the flat bodies are formed, such that the cut stalks can be held in an acute angle between the parallelogram-shaped projection and a front edge of the flat body and in another angle between the triangular projection and the front edge of the flat body of the upper holding plane.

27. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 26, wherein a space for the cut stalks, which is formed by the projections of the upper and lower holding planes acting as holding parts, narrows counter to the line of travel.

28. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 20, wherein a front edge of the flat bodies is of substantially arcuate shape between the projections.

29. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 20, wherein the flat bodies have at one end, parallel to the direction of rotation, a substantially arcuate broadening and, at an other end, a complementary recess, the flat bodies of adjacent ones of the conveyor links engaging one another with slight clearance in the assembled state.

30. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, a flat body bearing a driver configured as a counter-knife having, parallel to a direction of rotation of the endless conveyor, an arcuate segment at one end and, at an other end, a complementary recess, and adjacent flat bodies mating with one another with slight free play.

31. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, a front face of each of the conveyor links being substantially closed by a first deflecting shield and including a flat body lying in a conveying and guiding plane, a curvature of the deflection shields as well as a curvature of a leading edge of the flat body being configured arcuately.

32. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 28, wherein the radius of curvature of the arcuate shape is substantially the same as a radius of one of an idle sprocket and a drive sprocket disposed near the delivery area of the endless conveyor at the processing apparatus.

33. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, wherein each of the conveyor links of the endless conveyor is comprised of two sections locked to one another, said two sections including upper and lower sections.

34. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, wherein adjacent links of said conveyor links have a swiveling connection.

35. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 34, wherein the swiveling connection between said adjacent links of said conveyor links includes a pin carried on the upper section on a one of said adjacent links and a bearing to receive the pin in the lower section of an adjacent one of said adjacent links.

36. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 35, wherein said bearing is one of a sealed rolling bearing and a grooved ball bearing for the swiveling connection.

37. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~one of claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, wherein:

said conveyor links are comprised of flat bodies lying in a conveying and guiding plane, said flat bodies including arcuate segments; and

the arcuate segments of the flat bodies form a covering of bearings via which adjacent ones of said conveyer links are swivelingly connected.

38. (Previously Presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 33, wherein the sections of a conveyor link are bolted together.

39. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including

outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, each of the conveyor links of the endless conveyor being comprised of two sections locked to one another, said two sections including upper and lower sections, the upper section comprising flat bodies with projections forming the holding planes and with a deflection shield therebetween.

40. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, each of the conveyor links of the endless conveyor being comprised of two sections locked to one another, said two sections including upper and lower sections,

the lower section comprising counter-knives, configured as drivers, and a deflection shield.

41. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~one of claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, wherein the endless conveyor has projections on the conveyor links for engaging a drive.

42. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, the endless conveyor having projections on the conveyor links for engaging a drive, the projections being formed by sleeve bodies forming a bearing.

43. (Previously presented) The harvesting equipment of claim 42, further comprising at least two sprockets lying opposite one another for driving the at least one endless conveyor, said at least two sprockets engaging the projections and effecting rotation of the at least one endless conveyor.

44. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 43, wherein:

the endless conveyor includes a driving wheel at the delivery area; and

a turning around of the endless conveyor takes place in the delivery area to the further processing apparatus.

45. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~one of claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, wherein said at least one conveyor includes additional conveyors rotating about a common axis of rotation mounted in an area of a drive sprocket.

46. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~one of claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, wherein the conveyor links of the endless conveyor are guided in a movement thereof between driving and idle sprockets.

47. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~one of claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, wherein the conveyor links each includes engaging means provided on a back thereof aligned parallel to a direction of rotation of the endless conveyor and which are receivable into a corresponding recess of a guiding strip.

48. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction

of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, the conveyor links each including engaging means provided on a back thereof aligned parallel to a direction of rotation of the endless conveyor and which are receivable into a corresponding recess of a guiding strip, the engaging means being formed by an upturned projection which includes one of a sliding and rolling bearing to guide said upturned projection in the recess.

49. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~one of claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, wherein said at least one endless conveyor includes two endless conveyors pointing laterally outward and lying essentially next to one another in operation.

50. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~one of claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, further comprising:

a frame on which the endless conveyor is held; and

leaf and plant lifters carried on said frame, said lifter comprising a pyramid-shaped parting point.

51. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 50, wherein each said parting point includes a guiding hook which comprises an arm pointing substantially in a conveying direction.

52. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 51, wherein the arm extends up to an adjacent leaf and plant lifter.

53. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 51, wherein the guiding hook is resiliently mounted.

54. (Previously Presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 53, wherein a spring force of the guiding hook is put under tension against a line of travel so as to form a channel between a guiding plane and the working strand of the endless conveyor to carry the stalked plants counter to the line of travel.

55. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~one of claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, further comprising movable cutting knives separate from the endless conveyors, which are disposed underneath the endless conveyor.

56. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 55, wherein the movable cutting knives are configured as revolving disks and are disposed in a plane situated directly under a plane of movement of the endless conveyor and parallel to a path of movement thereof.

57. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 56, wherein the working strand of the endless conveyors sweeps over a transport area running transversely across a line of travel and the moving cutting knives configured as revolving disks are arranged side by side and staggered underneath said transport area.

58. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 55, wherein the cutting means cooperate with the moving cutting knives.

59. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 55, wherein the moving cutting knives freely sever the stalked plants.

60. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 55, wherein the moving cutting knives are fixedly journaled with respect to the frame holding the endless conveyors.

61. (Previously presented) The harvesting apparatus of claim 60, wherein the moving cutting knives are configured as revolving disks which run in two planes and which overlap one another.

62. (Currently Amended) The harvesting apparatus of ~~one of claims 1 or 2~~ claim 1, further comprising a fixed counter-knife in the delivery area under which a driver which is located at said at least one cutting plane closely passes and over which an additional driver situated above and parallel to the driver closely passes.

63. (Previously Presented) A harvesting apparatus for harvesting stalked plants, comprising at least one circulating endless conveyor which leads cut stalks to a delivery area at an end of a working strand thereof for delivering harvested plants to an inlet opening of a further processing apparatus, the endless conveyor comprising conveyor links articulated to one another, said conveyor links including outwardly pointing cutting means disposed on at least one cutting plane and outwardly pointing cut stalk holding means for holding the cut stalks disposed on at least one holding plane which is disposed above said at least one cutting plane, a forward portion of each of the conveyor links which faces outwardly in a direction of the cutting means and the cut stalk holding means, and which collectively comprises a front side of the endless conveyor, being structurally configured such that the front side of the endless conveyor is substantially closed to an opposed side thereto, the harvesting apparatus further comprising a fixed counter-knife in the delivery area under which a driver which is located at said at least one cutting plane

closely passes and over which an additional driver situated above and parallel to the driver closely passes, a front face of each of the conveyor links being substantially closed by at least one deflecting shield, and the additional driver being affixed to the conveyor links of the endless conveyor by means of projections fastened on a back thereof and reaching through the at least one deflection shield.